The Confederate Memorial Literary Society, Richmond, Va.

THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS-OF-WAR 1861-1865

PREPARED BY

SAMUEL E. LEWIS, M. D.

(LATE ASSISTANT SURGEON, C. S. A.)

OF

WASHINGTON, D. C.

RICHMOND, VA.
WM. ELLIS JONES, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER.
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THE

Treatment of Prisoners-of-War

1861=1865

Over 12 per cent. Confederate Soldiers
died in Northern Prisons.

Less than 9 per cent. Federal (Unionist) Prisoners
died in Southern Prisons.

The North held 220,000 Confederate Soldiers
as Prisoners-of-War.

The South held 270,000 Federal (Unionist) Soldiers
as Prisoners-of-War.

PREPARED BY

SAMUEL E. LEWIS, M. D., WASHINGTON, D. C.

[Late Assistant Surgeon, C. S. Army.]

1910

The Treatment of Prisoners-of-War.

In the second volume of the "War Between the States," written by Vice-President Alexander H. Stephens, published in 1870, is to be found recorded statement of the percentage of deaths of Federal soldiers held as prisoners-of-war by the Confederate authorities, and the percentage of deaths of Confederate soldiers held as prisoners-of-war by the Federal authorities, viz.: Under 9 per cent. in the South and over 12 per cent. in the North. (See Exhibit 2.)

In the great amnesty debate in the House of Representatives in 1876 the Hon. Benjamin H. Hill, of Georgia, made use of the same figures (see Exhibit 3); and the late President Jefferson Davis, in the second volume of his great work of 1881, the "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," wrote likewise (see Exhibit 4), both gentlemen apparently having in mind the statement previously made by Mr. Stephens, which has long ago become embodied in Southern literature—the newspapers, magazines, histories, orations, etc.

A few years ago, in preparation of a magazine article, I was about to incorporate the historical statement contained in the "War Between the States," when my pen was arrested by reflection upon its great significance and importance, which deeply impressed me and prompted the advisability before proceeding further of examining the original reports in full of both Secretary of War Stanton and Surgeon-General Barnes, the report of the former made in 1866, the latter said to have been made a year later, inasmuch as both reports had been mentioned by Mr. Stephens.

The report of Mr. Stanton was obtained without difficulty (see Exhibit 1), but upon application at the office of the Surgeon-General, I was astounded upon being told that the office had no knowledge of such report having been made by Surgeon-General Barnes, and, furthermore, that he was not in position to acquire the information to enable him to make report of that character. The War Department Library, the Library of the Army Medical Museum, the Library of Con-

gress, the House Document Room, the Senate Document Room and the Government Printing Office were then searched for the Barnes' report, but unavailing. Having failed in these several departments, it was decided to invoke the aid of Surgeon-General Robert M. O'Reilly, U. S. Army. Accordingly, he was visited on September 10, 1902, and acquainted with the subject of the inquiry, laying before him for that purpose for his examination the needed volumes of the works of Mr. Stephens and President Davis, and copy of the amnesty speech of the Hon. Benjamin H. Hill, and drawing his attention to the statements made by those eminent persons. He expressed much interest regarding the matter, and made an extended examination of his official library in effort to discover some data or reference bearing upon the report attributed to Surgeon-General Barnes. His examination being without result, the matter was referred by him for investigation to Surgeon Charles Smart, United States Army, the compiler and Editor of "Part Third, Medical Volume, 1888," of the "Medical and Surgical History of the Rebellion," who had been given *carte blanche* and free access to all papers in the departments of the Government for the preparation of that volume, but beyond citing his own work, in which there appeared no mention of the report of Surgeon-General Barnes, he expressed himself as being unable to throw any light upon the subject under consideration.

As to the existence of the report of Surgeon-General Barnes, it is worthy of note that General John B. Gordon, who was a member of the United States Congress at the time of the great Amnesty debate in 1876, and present on the occasion, has written under date of September 2, 1902, as follows:

"It is an astounding revelation that the report of Surgeon-General Barnes is missing, and I will lose no time in doing all in my power to ascertain what has become of that report. That it was made and was on file and was accessible there can be no question."

It is also worthy of note that in his Amnesty speech, the Hon. Mr. Hill called upon the Hon. James G. Blaine to correct his figures if they were not true. With twenty-four hours

to disprove the figures used by Mr. Hill, he did not venture to deny their accuracy. Also, it is worthy of note that Surgeon-General Barnes lived until April 6, 1883, and never raised his voice in contradiction of the editorial mention in the *National Intelligencer;* the statement in the 2nd volume of the "War Between the States," or the assertion by the Hon. Mr. Hill in Congress in 1876; nor otherwise, though for many years they were current in the literature of the South, and the subject of animated and bitter controversy with Northern writers.

In commenting upon the subject, General Clement A. Evans, August 28, 1902, very conservatively said in writing: "As to the missing report I think it is incumbent on the War Department to explain. Yet on our part we must accumulate proofs that the report was made."

The matter concerning the existence or non-existence of the report of Surgeon-General Barnes is most unfortunately involved in mystery exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to remove, but the *National Intelligencer* was eminently reputable, and the *editorial* in question (see Exhibit 5), was the leading one of the issue of the date of June 2, 1869; nor would anyone presume to question the sincerity and probity of Mr. Stephens in making the statement now so well known; nor the sincere belief of the other prominent Southern gentlemen who have followed him.

Nor should aspersion be cast upon the officers of the departments of the United States Government. It is possible that some error was made by the office which furnished to Mr. Stanton the figures used by him as to the number of Union soldiers held as prisoners by the South; and further search may bring to light some report of Dr. Barnes which may meet the case—lost perhaps in the multiplicity of affairs, amid the confusion of the period lately following a great internecine struggle, when there was lack of the more perfect clerical methods which prevail at this time. It is strange that there appears not to have been made any serious effort in refutation of Mr. Hill in the House of Representatives in 1876.

The determination of the percentages of deaths—North

and South—is of great importance as bearing upon the conduct of the war, the observance or non-observance of the cartels of exchange of prisoners, the humaneness or un-humaneness, the operation of the medical and surgical departments, the skilfulness of physicians and surgeons, the congestion of prison hospitals, the suffering of prisoners-of-war, etc., and the degrees of the percentages of deaths is the ultimate test.

It is upon the supposed existence of the Report of Surgeon-General Barnes that Vice-President Stephens based his figures as to the percentages of deaths, viz.: Under *nine* per cent. in the South, and over *twelve* per cent. in the North.

Owing to the fact that the Barnes' Report cannot be found in the libraries or departments at Washingeon, and that the United States authorities deny that such report was made, the conclusion must be reached that if the report was made at all, it has been lost or mislaid. In the absence of said Barnes' Report, the only other authority of record, hitherto known to historical writers, regarding the data as to the number of Union soldiers held as prisoners-of-war in the South, has been the report of Mr. Stanton, made July 19, 1866.

In the consideration of the matter of the two reports it is to be observed: first, that there is no contention between writers on the differing sides, as to the percentage of deaths of Confederate soldiers held in Northern prisons—that percentage being a fraction over *twelve;* second, that the only essential difference between the two reports is as to the number of Union soldiers held as prisoners-of-war by the South. That difference is of the greatest importance. The Barnes' Report states the number to have been 270,000. The Stanton Report states the number to have been 126,940. If calculation be based on the figure 270,000, of Barnes' Report, there results a percentage of deaths of *less than nine* of Union soldiers held as prisoners in the South. If calculation be based on the figure 126,940 of Stanton's Report there results a percentage of deaths of *more than seventeen* of Union soldiers held as prisoners in the South.

Therefore, inasmuch as the Barnes' Report cannot be found, it is imperative that proof should be sought in other directions, that the South really held as many as 270,000 Union

soldiers as prisoners-of-war. This proof is partially found in a United States Congressional document, entitled "Treatment of Prisoners-of-War by Rebel Authorities," the same being "Report No. 45, House of Representatives, Fortieth United States Congress, Third Session," (commonly known as Shanks' Report—July 10, 1867, to February 6, 1869), which gives a detailed statement showing the numbers of Federal prisoners-of-war held in the South which were exchanged, illegally paroled, escaped, recaptured and enlisted in the Confederate service, during the period of the war from 1861 to 1865, amounting to a total of 161,817, as shown by records of Federal prisoners-of-war filed in the office of the Adjutant-General at Washington, D. C., (see Exhibit 6). Following the above is a detailed statement of those who died while in prison (according to that report), 26,328 (see Exhibit 7), showing a grand total accounted for by the United States Adjutant-General's office of 188,145. In passing, it is to be observed that this grand total of 188,145 accounted for by the Adjutant-General's office is greater by 61,205 than Mr. Stanton's report of 126,940.

To the 188,145, as above given, should be added the number of Federal prisoners-of-war held by the Confederate authorities at the end of the war, and released by the Federal authorities upon the collapse of the Confederacy. The final total would show the entire number of Federal (Union) soldiers who were held prisoners-of-war by the Confederate authorities in the period of the war from 1861 to 1865.

The only source from which could be ascertained the number of Federal prisoners released at the end of the war, is the War Department at Washington. But application for the information has been made there without avail. (See Exhibit 8.)

The statement of that department (see Exhibit 8) that "it is impossible to determine the number of Union soldiers held in Confederate prisons who were released at the close of the war" is of very surprising character; but fortunately there exists testimony which may be deemed to be of some weight in affording at least a hypothetical approximation sufficiently reasonable and accurate for the purpose of this paper.

The Hon. James M. Mason, then Commissioner of the

Confederate Government at London, England, in replying, January 25, 1865, to a communication from Mr. A. Coolidge, of Boston, Mass., wrote: "At last accounts there were some sixty thousand (60,000) of your countrymen prisoners-of-war in the Confederate States, and remaining there solely because of the refusal of your Government to take them back." (See Exhibit 9.)

It is to be noted that in view of the great distance Mr. Mason was from the seat of the Confederate Government, and the almost impossibility of transmitting dispatches beyond the encircled boundaries of the Confederacy at that period, that some considerable time—perhaps months—must have elapsed before the accounts referred to by Mr. Mason could have reached his hands. In the meantime, say three or four months, from the sending of said accounts from Richmond (October or November, 1864), until the surrender at Appomattox, there prevailed great activity in both armies in all directions, and many fierce engagements took place, so that there having been in the meantime but inconsequential exchanges of prisoners-of-war, the number of Federal soldiers held by the Confederate Government at the time of the fall of the Confederacy must have been very greatly increased in excess of the number stated by Mr. Mason. It is reasonable to suppose that such increase amounted at least to the number of 21,855, that is to say, 81,855 Union soldiers were held in Confederate hands at the time of the collapse of the Confederacy.

Assuming the statement of Mr. Mason to be reliable, and the increase over 60,000 reasonably estimated, recapitulation may be made as follows:

1. The number accounted for per Exhibit 6.....161,817
2. The number accounted for per Exhibit 7..... 26,328
3. The number accounted for per Mr. Mason, Exhibit 9 60,000
4. The assumed increase over Mr. Mason's figures. 21,855

Total 270,000

which total number agrees with the total number (270,000) of Union soldiers held by the Confederate authorities, accord-

ing to the report attributed to Surgeon-General Joseph K. Barnes, United States Army.

Some contention may be made adverse to the figures given by Mr. Mason, and as to the estimated increase over them, up to the time of the fall of the Confederacy. But the figures are deemed to be reasonable, and may be permitted to stand, at least until the United States authorities shall be able to show how many Union soldiers were released from Southern prisons at the collapse of the Confederate Government.

Therefore, it would seem to be clear that even though the report attributed to Surgeon-General Barnes may never be found, yet there is abundant evidence that there existed real foundation for making report of such character, either by himself or some other person having authority to do so, that "the Confederates captured of Union soldiers and held in Southern prisons in round numbers 270,000 men," and thus there being no contention regarding the other figures given in the reports of Secretary of War Stanton and Surgeon-General Barnes, the percentages of deaths stand as stated by Vice-President Stephens: "According to these figures the percentum of Federal deaths in Southern prisons was under nine, while the percentum of Confederate deaths in Northern prisons was over twelve."

And therefore is the historical statement made by Mr. Stephens fully sustained, even without the presence of the report attributed to Surgeon-General Barnes, United States Army.

EXHIBIT 1.

Letter of the Secretary of War, in answer to a resolution of the House of Representatives July 12, 1866, relative to the number of Union and Rebel soldiers who died while held as prisoners-of-war. July 28, 1866—Laid on the table and ordered to be printed. (See Executive Document No. 152, House of Representatives, 39th Congress, 1st Session.)

WAR DEPARTMENT,

Washington City, July 19, 1866.

Sir:—In compliance with a resolution of the House of

EXHIBIT 5.

(Editorial From the *National Intelligencer*, June 2, 1869. Page 2, Column 1.)

"MORE FALSEHOOD UPON SYSTEM."

"On Monday next the committee of the Union War Prisoners' Association will have an interview with the President concerning the proposed erection of a grand national monument to the memory of the 35,000 prisoners who died in Southern prisons during the war. The association contemplates asking from Congress the grant of a public square on Pennsylvania Avenue on which to erect the proposed monument."

"Such is the extract we cull from a radical sheet. Here is the exciting falsehood that 35,000 prisoners died in 'Southern prisons during the war.' What is the official evidence that we have, as laid before the country, of a fact that we now assert? It is this: Surgeon-General Barnes, of the United States Army and War Office, year before last made a full report on this subject, showing these startling statistics: That, from first to last, during the war, the Confederates captured of Union soldiers and held in Southern prisons in round numbers 270,000 men; and that the Unionists captured of Confederate soldiers and held in Northern prisons in round numbers 220,000 men, yet that there died in Northern prisons in round numbers 28,000 Southern soldiers, and in Southern prisons, in round numbers, 22,000.

"Although the Confederates captured and held 50,000 more men than the Union armies captured and held, yet in Northern prisons 6,000 more men died from alleged ill-usage exposure and deprivation than died from the same causes in Southern prisons. It is a striking fact in this regard that the average percentage of mortality in Northern prisons was greater because Southern prisoners were mostly taken towards the close of the war, and were, therefore, the shortest time in confinement. But who is there now in the land that does not know, if General Butler is to be believed, that General Grant and Edwin Stanton are directly personally responsible in large part for the deaths of Union men in Southern

prisons, and particularly for most of the suffering and harrowing misery at Andersonville?

"General Butler has stated on the floor of Congress in view of all and every official responsibility attaching to his position as a Representative, as well as in view of every responsibility attaching to his assertion as a man, that after he had arranged with the Confederate authorities for the exchange of the Union prisoners upon the fairest, indeed, upon the most exacting Union terms, the whole arrangement was defeated by the direct interposition of General Grant and Mr. Stanton, upon the ground that 'the exchange would give to General Lee 30,000 fresh troops,' which, it is plain, they thought would hazard the safety of Grant's army upon the Petersburg line, as indeed it would have done, though not probably with much prospect of ultimate success. Yet the best military officers of the South only desired, so they say, one additional full army corps at the back of Lee to have cut in two Grant's great army and thus prolonged the war indefinitely.

"We thus cut the head of this systematic Radical Hydra off again, as we have repeatedly done heretofore.

"In connection with the well-known fact of the cold-blooded neglect of Secretary Stanton and General Grant to send vessels to carry off Andersonville prisoners, as desired by the rebel authorities, without stipulation of any sort as to exchange, and their refusal also to provide medicines for them, as also asked by General Ould at Richmond, it must be borne in mind that a resolution which was introduced in Congress to ascertain officially as to facts of deprivation and suffering by rebels in Northern prisons was deliberately voted down.

"We would simply say to the rancorous and revengeful element of politicians that infest the executive presence, and promise to raise monuments and do one and several other things to prolong the hates of the war, provided that they can get office, that a vast number of the very best men in the Republican party are disgusted at their efforts to tear open the wounds that come of Civil War. They say, 'Let us have peace.'"

"I hereby certify that this is a true copy of the editorial in *The National Intelligencer* of June 2, 1869, page 2, column 1.

"G. T. RITCHIE,
"*Library of Congress.*

"September 6, 1904.

"Subscribed and sworn to before me this 6th day of September, 1904.

(Notarial Seal) "HENRY E. TRIPP,
"Notary Public, D. C."

EXHIBIT 6.

Disposition of Federal Prisoners of War Held in Confederate Prisons.

Copy from Treatment Prisoners-of-War by Rebel Authorities, Report No. 45, House Representatives, Fortieth Congress, Third Session, pages 742 to 755 (Shanks' Report, July 10, 1867, to February 6, 1869, Published Government Printing Office, 1869):

Statement showing the number of Federal prisoners-of-war exchanged, illegally paroled, escaped, recaptured and enlisted in Confederate service during the rebellion of 1861-'65, as shown by records of Federal prisoners-of-war filed in the adjutant-General's office, of Washington, D. C.:

Legally Paroled and Exchanged.

White—Officers, 6,444; enlisted men, 146,103; citizens, 1,547. Total, 154,094.

Colored—Officers, 35; enlisted men, 201. Total, 236.

Illegally Paroled.

White—Officers, 59; enlisted men, 821; citizens, 217. Total, 1,097.

Colored—Officers, 46. Total, 46.

Escaped.

White—Officers, 394; enlisted men, 2,273; citizens, 29. Total, 2,696.

Colored—Officers, 3; enlisted men, 74. Total, 77.

Recaptured.

White—Enlisted men, 17. Total 17.

Colored—Enlisted men, 384. Total, 384.

Enlisted in Confederate Service.

White—Enlisted men, 3,161; citizens, 9. Total, 3,170.

Aggregate—Officers, 6,981; enlisted men, 153,034; citizens, 1,803. Grand total, 161,817.

EXHIBIT 7.

Statement of Federal prisoners-of-war who died in the hands of the Confederate authorities during the rebellion, 1861-1865, with the name and locality of prisons. Names of commanding officers of the same, the cause of the death, and the number of graves marked and known, and the number marked unknown; page 757, Shanks' Report. (Details omitted):

Deaths: White—Officers, 110; enlisted men, 25,979; citizens, 160. Total, 26,249.

Colored—Officers, 1; enlisted men, 78. Total, 79.

Grand total, 26,328.

EXHIBIT 8.

Headquarters

ROUSS CAMP, No. 1191, U. C. V.,

1418 Fourteenth Street, N. W.,

Washington, D. C., May 30, 1905.

General F. C. AINSWORTH, Military Secretary:

General:—For historical purposes I respectfully request the aid of your department in ascertaining, if possible, the number of Union soldiers held in Confederate prisons which were released at the end of the war.

I would not trouble you with the matter, but I have made diligent search elsewhere without avail.

I have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) SAMUEL E. LEWIS, M. D.,

Commander.

First Indorsement.

File with R. and P., 184934 U. Military Secretary's Office, May 31, 1905. 1019563, War Department.

Washington, D. C., May 30, 1905.

Samuel E. Lewis, M. D., desires to ascertain, if possible, the number of Union soldiers held in Confederate prisons which were released at the end of the war.

Second Indorsement.

War Department,

The Military Secretary's Office,

Washington, May 31, 1905.

Respectfully returned to Samuel E. Lewis, M. D.,
1418 Fourteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.:

Because of the total absence of returns of Union soldiers in the hands of the Confederates during the last few months of the Civil War it is impossible to determine the number of Union soldiers held in Confederate prisons who were released at the close of that war.

F. C. Ainsworth,
The Military Secretary.

Exhibit 9.

"The Public Life and Correspondence of James M. Mason," Confederate States Commissioner to England, by his daughter, published in 1903, contains a letter written by him at London, Eng., to A. Coolidge, Esq., Boston, Mass., January 25, 1865, from which the following extract is made:

"And thus it has resulted that, at last accounts, there were some sixty thousand (60,000) of your countrymen prisoners-of-war in the Confederate States, and remaining there solely because of the refusal of your Government to take them back."

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